

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2871

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 0169

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJ:SOVIET VIEW OF THE CHINA SITUATION

SUMMARY: MOSCOW HAS INSTRUCTED SOME OF ITS DIPLOMATS ABROAD TO BRIEF AMERICAN COLLEAGUES ON RECENT EVENTS IN CHINA AND THEIR IMPORT (STILL UNCLEAR) FOR SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS.

THERE IS GREAT CONFUSION IN CHINA, AS THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP "FIGHTS MAOISM UNDER THE BANNER OF MAO," WITH NO SIGN YET OF ANY CHANGE IN PRC EXTERNAL POLICIES; THE SOVIETS HAVE HAD NO RESPONSE TO THEIR FRIENDLY OVERTURES, BUT WILL WAIT PATIENTLY AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS; PERHAPS THINGS WILL GET BETTER IF TENG HSIAO-P'ING COMES BACK, BECAUSE, DESPITE HIS ANTI-SOVIET CREDENTIALS, HE IS A PRAGMATIST. MOSCOW WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW OTHER COUNTRIES SEE THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE PRC DEVELOPING AT THIS POINT. BURMA'S PRESIDENT NE WIN, BY THE WAY, WOULD REGARD A TENG COMEBACK AS A FAVORABLE OMEN. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET CHARGE BORIS I. JILIAEV ASKED ME TO LUNCH JAN 14 TO HEAR A SOVIET ANALYSIS OF EVENTS IN CHINA AS THEY AFFECT SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. HE BEGAN BY SAYING "I THINK THIS IS A WORLD-WIDE EXERCISE, SO YOUR AMBASSADORS IN OTHER
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PLACES ARE PROBABLY HEARING THE SAME THING." WHAT FOLLOWED WAS A RATHER INSUBSTANTIAL SUMMARY OF EVENTS SINCE THE DEATH OF MAO, WITH STRESS ON THE NUMEROUS EVIDENCES OF CONTINUING CONFUSION IN CHINA, AS ATTACKS ON THE "GANG OF FOUR" CONTINUE, ON THE RESULTANT DETERIORATION OF THE ECONOMY, AND ON UNCERTAINTIES CONCERNING THE POWER SITUATION IN THE MILITARY. A MINOR THESE WAS

THAT THE SUPPORTERS OF TENG HSIAO-PING ARE "FIGHTING MAOISM UNDER THE BANNER OF MAO." COMMENT: JILIAEV WAS A MEMBER OF THE SOVIET BORDER TALKS DELEGATION IN PEKING UNTIL 1973, BUT IS NOT OTHERWISE EXPERIENCED IN CHINESE AFFAIRS.

2. THE IMPORT OF THESE EVENTS FOR SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS WAS UNCLEAR, ACCORDING TO JILIAEV; AT THIS TIME THERE WAS STILL NO INDICATION OF ANY CHANGE IN CHINA'S EXTERNAL POLICIES. THE SOVIET UNION HAS MADE A NUMBER OF OVERTURES (WHICH JILIAEV REVIEWED), BUT THE CHINESE HAVE NOT RESPONDED. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CHINESE HAVE NOT PARTICULARLY HARDENED THEIR ATTITUDE. JILIAEV SAID HE HAD BEEN IN MOSCOW RECENTLY AND HAD BEEN AT THE SEEING-OFF PARTY FOR THE SOVIET DELEGATION TO THE BORDER TALKS (ILICHEV, HIS NEW DEPUTY LUBANOV ET AL). THEIR MOOD OF OPTIMISM ON THIS OCCASION HAD BEEN HEIGHTENED BY THE PRESENCE AT THE SEEING-OFF OF ONE OF THE MORE AFFABLE MEMBERS OF THE CHINESE EMBASSY MOSCOW, A FORMER CHIEF INTERPRETER AT THE BORDER TALKS. OPTIMISM HAD NOT, HOWEVER, BEEN SUSTAINED BY ANY REAL PROGRESS IN PEKING. THE SOVIETS CAN ONLY WAIT AND SEE, JILIAEV SAID; PERHAPS IF TENG HSIAO-PING COMES BACK THINGS WILL IMPROVE. JILIAEV ADMITTED THAT TENG HAD PRETTY GOOD ANTI-SOVIET CREDENTIALS HIMSELF, BUT FELT THAT TENG, BEING A PRAGMATIST, WAS CAPABLE OF CHANGE.

3. I ASKED JILIAEV WHAT THE MAIN POINT OF THE ABOVE PRESENTATION WAS, WHAT IMPRESSION HIS GOVT WAS SEEKING TO CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVEY. HE DID NOT SEEM TOO SURE HIMSELF, BUT SAID THE MAIN POINT PROBABLY WAS TO LET OTHER COUNTRIES KNOW THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS BEING REASONABLE VIS-A-VIS CHINA, THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO WAIT PATIENTLY, AND THAT ANY DIFFICULTIES THAT MIGHT EXIST BETWEEN PEKING AND MOSCOW WERE NOT THE FAULT OF THE USSR. HE ADDED THE "SPECULATION" THAT MOSCOW MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN KNOWING HOW OTHER COUNTRIES' VIEW THE FUTURE OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AT THIS TIME. I SAID I COULD ONLY GIVE A PERSONAL VIEW, BASED ON PUBLISHED INFORMATION. ON THAT BASIS, I WOULD GENERALLY AGREE WITH JILIAEV'S MAIN CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION, I.E., THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE CONFUSION, THAT AN ATTEMPT IS APPARENTLY BEING MADE TO ROOT OUT MAOIST EXCESSES WITHOUT HOWEVER RENOUNCING LOYALTY TO MAO, AND THAT THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY IMMINENT CHANGE IN CHINA'S EXTERNAL POLICIES, PARTICULARLY TOWARD THE USSR (I STRESSED THAT IN MY OPINION, THE U.S. HAD NOTHING TO FEAR FROM SINO-SOVIET RAPPROCHEMENT). PEOPLES DAILY HAD RECENTLY SUGGESTED THAT PRC IS READY FOR AN

ACCOMMODATION WITH THE U.S. OVER THE TAIWAN ISSUE BASED ON THE 1955 "RENUNCIATION OF FORCE" FORMULA, AND IF TRUE THIS COULD BE A REMINDER THAT THE WAY IS OPEN TO NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. HOWEVER, THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION WAS UNDER NO PRESSURE TO MOVE AHEAD RASHLY; IT COULD AFFORD TO MOVE DELIBERATELY.

4. JILIAEV ASKED WHAT WE EXPECTED TO SEE IN PRC-GUB RELATIONS. WHEN I SAID THE ISSUE OF RELATIONS WITH BURMA WAS PROBABLY NOT IN THE FOREFRONT OF PEKING'S CONCERNS JUST NOW, JILIAEV AGREED, BUT SAID HE WAS INTRIGUED BY A REPORTED STATEMENT MADE TO DEPARTING YUGOSLAV AMBASSADOR ZULFICARI BY PRESIDENT NE WIN LAST WEEK, THAT IF TENG HSIAO-PING WAS REINSTATED (AS NE WIN EXPECTED), NE WIN WOULD PROPOSE TO THE CHINESE THAT THEY STOP THEIR SUPPORT OF THE BCP, WHEREUPON THE GUB WOULD NEGOTIATE WITH THE BCP FOR A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THEIR DIFFERENCES.
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COMMENT: AT HIS AIRPORT FAREWELL JAN 17, I ASKED ZULFICARI WHAT EXACTLY NE WIN HAD SAID ABOUT CHINA. ZULFICARI SAID NE WIN HAD EXPRESSED HIS EXPECTATION AND HIS HOPE THAT TENG HSIAO-PING WOULD BE REINSTATED. ZULFICARI SAID HE HAD INFERRED RPT INFERRED FROM NE WIN'S ATTITUDE THAT NE WIN THOUGHT TENG'S REINSTATEMENT WOULD CREATE A FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR RESOLUTION OF PRC-GUB DIFFERENCES, OF WHICH THE MAIN ONE IS THE PRC SUPPORT OF THE BCP.
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